

Announcers

(0*NET 27-3011.00, 27-3012.00)

Significant Points

- Competition for announcer jobs will continue to be keen.
- Jobs at small stations usually have low pay, but offer the best opportunities for beginners.
- Related work experience at a campus radio station or as an intern at a commercial station can be helpful in breaking into the occupation.

Nature of the Work

Announcers in radio and television perform a variety of tasks on and off the air. They announce station program information, such as program schedules and station breaks for commercials, or public service information, and they introduce and close programs. Announcers read prepared scripts or ad-lib commentary on the air, as they present news, sports, weather, time, and commercials. If a written script is required, they may do the research and writing. Announcers also interview guests and moderate panels or discussions. Some provide commentary for the audience during sporting events, at parades, and on other occasions. Announcers often are well known to radio and television audiences and may make promotional appearances and remote broadcasts for their stations.

Radio announcers often are called *disc jockeys (DJs)*. Some disc jockeys specialize in one kind of music, announcing selections as they air them. Most DJs do not select much of the music they play (although they often did so in the past); instead, they follow schedules of commercials, talk, and music provided to them by management. While on the air, DJs comment on the music, weather, and traffic. They may take requests from listeners, interview guests, and manage listener contests.

Newscasters, or *anchors*, work at large stations and specialize in news, sports, or weather. (See the related statement on news analysts, reporters, and correspondents elsewhere in the *Handbook*.) *Show hosts* may specialize in a certain area of interest, such as politics, personal finance, sports, or health. They contribute to the preparation of the program's content, interview guests, and discuss issues with viewers, listeners, or the studio audience.

Announcers at smaller stations may cover all of these areas and tend to have more off-air duties as well. They may operate the control board, monitor the transmitter, sell commercial time to advertisers, keep a log of the station's daily programming, and produce advertisements and other recorded material. Advances in technology make it possible for announcers to do some work previously performed by broadcast technicians. At many music stations, the announcer is simultaneously responsible for both announcing and operating the control board, which is used to broadcast programming, commercials, and public-service announcements according to the station's schedule. (See the statement on broadcast and sound engineering technicians and radio operators elsewhere in the *Handbook*.) Public radio and television announcers are involved in station fundraising efforts.

Changes in technology have led to more remote operation of stations. Several stations in different locations of the same region may be operated from one office. Some stations operate without any staff overnight, playing programming from a satel-

lite feed or using programming that was recorder earlier, including segments from announcers.

Announcers frequently participate in community activities. Sports announcers, for example, may serve as masters of ceremonies at sports club banquets or may greet customers at openings of sporting goods stores.

Although most announcers are employed in broadcasting, some are employed in the motion picture production industry. *Public address system announcers* provide information to the audience at sporting, performing arts, and other events. Some disc jockeys announce and play music at clubs, dances, restaurants, and weddings.

Working Conditions

Announcers usually work in well-lighted, air-conditioned, soundproof studios. The broadcast day is long for radio and TV stations—many are on the air 24 hours a day—so announcers can expect to work unusual hours. Many present early-morning shows, when most people are getting ready for work or commuting, while others do late-night programs.

Announcers often work within tight schedule constraints, which can be physically and mentally stressful. For many announcers, the intangible rewards—creative work, many personal contacts, and the satisfaction of becoming widely known—far outweigh the disadvantages of irregular and often unpredictable hours, work pressures, and disrupted personal lives.

Employment

Announcers held about 76,000 jobs in 2002. More than half were employed in broadcasting, but some were self-employed freelance announcers who sold their services for individual assignments to networks and stations or to advertising agencies and other independent producers. About a third of all announcers work part time.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Entry into this occupation is highly competitive. Formal training in broadcasting from a college or technical school (private broadcasting school) is valuable. Most announcers have a bachelor's degree in a major such as communications, broadcasting, or journalism. Station officials pay particular attention to taped auditions that show an applicant's delivery and—in television—appearance and style on commercials, news, and interviews. Those hired by television stations usually start out



Some public-address system announcers work at sporting events.

as production assistants, researchers, or reporters and are given a chance to move into announcing if they show an aptitude for “on-air” work. A beginner’s chance of landing an on-air job is remote, except possibly at a small radio station, as a substitute for a familiar announcer, or on the late-night shift at a larger station. In radio, newcomers usually start out taping interviews and operating equipment.

Announcers usually begin at a station in a small community and, if they are qualified, may move to a better paying job in a large city. They also may advance by hosting a regular program as a disc jockey, sportscaster, or other specialist. Competition is particularly intense for employment by networks, and employers look for college graduates with at least several years of successful announcing experience.

Announcers must have a pleasant and well-controlled voice, good timing, excellent pronunciation, and correct grammar. College broadcasting programs offer courses, such as voice and diction, to help students improve their vocal qualities. Television announcers need a neat, pleasing appearance as well. Knowledge of theater, sports, music, business, politics, and other subjects likely to be covered in broadcasts improves one’s chances for success. Announcers also must be computer literate, because programming is created and edited by computer. Announcers need strong writing skills, because they normally write their own material. In addition, they should be able to ad-lib all or part of a show and to work under tight deadlines. The most successful announcers attract a large audience by combining a pleasing personality and voice with an appealing style.

High school and college courses in English, public speaking, drama, foreign languages, and computer science are valuable, and hobbies such as sports and music are additional assets. Students may gain valuable experience at campus radio or TV facilities and at commercial stations while serving as interns. Paid or unpaid internships provide students with hands-on training and the chance to establish contacts in the industry. Unpaid interns often receive college credit and are allowed to observe and assist station employees. Although the Fair Labor Standards Act limits the work unpaid interns may perform in a station, unpaid internships are the rule. Unpaid internships sometimes lead to paid internships, which are valuable because interns do work ordinarily performed by regular employees and may even go on the air.

Persons considering enrolling in a broadcasting school should contact personnel managers of radio and television stations, as well as broadcasting trade organizations, to determine the school’s reputation for producing suitably trained candidates.

Job Outlook

Competition for jobs as announcers will be keen because the broadcasting field attracts many more jobseekers than there are jobs. Small radio stations are more inclined to hire beginners, but the pay is low. Applicants who have completed internships or have related work experience usually receive preference for available positions. Because competition for ratings is so intense in major metropolitan areas, large stations will continue to seek announcers who have proven that they can attract and retain a sizable audience.

Announcers who are knowledgeable in business, consumer, and health news may have an advantage over others. While specialization is more common at large stations and the networks, many small stations also encourage it.

Employment of announcers is expected to decline through 2012, due to the lack of growth of new radio and television

stations and consolidation of existing stations, but some job openings will arise from the need to replace those who transfer to other kinds of work or leave the labor force. Some announcers leave the field because they cannot advance to better paying jobs. Changes in station ownership, format, and ratings frequently cause periods of unemployment for many announcers.

Increasing consolidation of radio and television stations, new technology, and the growth of alternative media sources, such as cable television and satellite radio, will contribute to the expected decline in employment of announcers. Consolidation in broadcasting may lead to an increased use of syndicated programming and programs originating outside a station’s viewing or listening area. Digital technology is increasing the productivity of announcers, reducing the time required to edit material or perform other off-air technical and production work.

Earnings

Salaries in broadcasting vary widely, but generally are relatively low, except for announcers who work for large stations in major markets or for networks. Earnings are higher in television than in radio and higher in commercial than in public broadcasting.

Median hourly earnings of announcers in 2002 were \$9.91. The middle 50 percent earned between \$7.13 and \$15.10. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$6.14, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$24.92. Median hourly earnings of announcers in 2002 were \$9.86 in the radio and television broadcasting industry.

Related Occupations

The success of announcers depends upon how well they communicate. Others who must be skilled at oral communication include news analysts, reporters, and correspondents; interpreters and translators; salespersons and those in related occupations; and public-relations specialists. Many announcers also must entertain their audience, so their work is similar to other entertainment-related occupations, such as actors, producers, and directors; and musicians, singers, and related workers. Announcers perform a variety of duties, including some technical operations, like broadcast sound engineering technicians and radio operators.

Sources of Additional Information

General information on the broadcasting industry is available from

► National Association of Broadcasters, 1771 N St. NW., Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.nab.org>